COTTON CHATS

DRAPER COMPANY, HOPEDALE, MASS.

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HOPEDALE, MASS.

NO. 128. JUNE, 1913.

UP TO JULY 1, OUR RELATIONS WITH THE I. W. W.

and our striking employees is as indicated by the following letter from a so-called strike committee dated June 30, 1913, and the reply by our General Superintendent, Mr. C. E. Nutting, dated July 1, 1913.

Strike Committee,
Milford, Mass.
June 30, 1913.

Mr. Nutting,
Hopedale, Mass.

Dear Sir:

After the meeting we had Friday, June 27, in your office in Hopedale, Mass., we thought it our duty to communicate what the result of the discussion was to all the strikers and this was done at the meeting, Saturday, June 29.

The strikers thought it over with satisfaction of the meeting held, if no other benefit, it was to clear a part of some assertions that certainly might have been obstacles to any good meeting.

But what we think will be utile in the interest of both parties in this moment is in explaining better the causes of the strike. Believe us, Mr. Nutting, that it does not correspond with the truth when it is affirmed that the strike was promoted by people that are strangers to the factory or against the majority of the strikers, instead, it was nothing but the consequence of a long ill treatment that induced us laborers to a spontaneous act of protest, so that at least once we could have our rights recognized. Yes, with a tranquil conscience, we can affirm that for a long time the bosses were abusing and ill treating us, and with words they would also hurt our feelings. And this is a truth, inasmuch the majority of the laborers every week would notice the cutting of their pays that which logically would promote and continue the discontent amongst the laborers, and this could not be beneficial for the good going of the factory. But what provoked more the just indignation was the fact that anytime that we tried to give our lamentations to the superiors so as to find a little more justice, we were impeded by the bosses with the threat that we would be fired.

But these facts, certainly, were not the first causes that determined the actual conflict, but joining also the system of payment that is used. Although, laborers, that after having given all the muscular strength and intelligence for a long week, would be retributed with very few dollars, justifying such decrease for poor work. The

laborers would ask the reasons and the causes of poor work, or they asked to see the poor work, but they were answered negatively.

Now, we also, say, is it just, is it honest, that for several reasons of work, a laborer must submit to determine cuttings on work that he has done and earned, thusly making his salary smaller, for a damage not caused by the negligence or inattention of the laborer but for the material of the work?

These in a general line (we leave out for now other questions of the greatest importance) are the reasons that drove us to the strike noting that in the greatest majority for many years we have been working and depending from the Draper Co.

But, it is our thought that from a sereen and just discussion between the company representatives and a committee of the laborers we can accommodate with satisfaction on both parts the situation.

We do not deny though that other misunderstandings have not been cleared in their true sincerity and they are probably the reasons that are obstacles to any civil understanding. But, we let you know that after communicating what the result of the discussion was last Friday, the strikers formed the following demands that can yet be argument of discussion and not of repulse.

I. That a shop committee be accepted that would take away many inconveniences that certainly are not of utility to the company and would facilitate the trouble of other laborers that do not understand the American language.

II. That all the prices of the work be exposed in the

different departments of the factory so that every laborer may have the control of what work he does and what he earns.

III. The minimum of a daily pay be at least $2.00. (This request being approved and asked because of the fact that many times laborers have to remain inactive for long hours for the breaking or fixing of a machine, etc., that certainly is not the fault or negligence of the said laborer).

IV. That everything that is called poor work, upon the request of the worker is to be showed to him so as to see with ample freedom the truth and this because since today at any just request to see poor work was always refused.

V. The putting back of all the striking laborers in their places occupied before.

These are our reasons, reasons as you can consider corresponding with the straightest elementary necessities and for this we have faith in your well known courtesy that not only will you keep in benevolent consideration but towards the Draper Company you will give your precious and valuable approval so that they may be accepted.

Faithful and sure of your courtesy and awaiting a favorable reply we remain

Respectfully yours,

The Committee of Striking Laborers:

Santo Bagnoli, John Paccioretti, Nunzioto di Vitto, S. Ferino.

Hopedale, Mass.,
July 1, 1913.

To Messrs.

Santo Bagnoli,
John Paccioretti,
Nunzioto di Vitto,
S. Ferino.

Dear Sirs:—

Your letter of June 30th has been received, and contents carefully noted.

In the first place, I desire to state to you that I should not have had the pleasure of seeing you when I did had I known that you were members of a "strike committee."

I was told that three or four men who had formerly worked for us were anxious to see me to talk about themselves and others coming back to work under existing conditions. I was not informed that I was expected to see a "strike committee" to discuss any changes in conditions. Had I been told that this was what I was expected to do, I should have declined to see you, and have referred the matter to the Board of Directors for their consideration, but I was not so informed, and was glad to talk with men who had formerly been in our employ and who, I understood, were desirous of coming back to work.

I do not propose to enter into a discussion with you, at this time, in regard to the matters that you write about, but will simply say that I do not, in any material respect, agree with the statements that you have made.

The time for discussion between "committees" in regard to returning to work in large bodies, or a claim for any particular person's job, so-called, has passed. The men who went on strike at the Draper Company, now more than three months ago, gave up their jobs at that

time, and have done all in their power to prevent people from coming to work at Hopedale; they ceased to be employees of the Draper Company a long time ago. Any claim that they may have had for certain jobs at which they were at work expired long since.

We have a very large number of men at work, and there are comparatively few vacant places. We have no ill feeling against the majority of the Italians who stopped working for the Draper Company suddenly three months since. We are sorry that they have been so easily misled by men who did not work for the Draper Company, and who have led them into hardship and trouble, and have brought nothing but bad results to the citizens of Milford, the former workmen of the Draper Company, and the Draper Company itself.

As I said above, there is some opportunity for work that still remains; this chance, in my opinion, will not last long. If any of the Italians who went on strike three months ago desire to work again for the Draper Company, it will be necessary for them to apply for work as individuals; and if we have work for them, we shall be glad to consider their applications but in no other way shall we be able to give work to men who apply.

We regret extremely that, because many hundreds of good and faithful men who had formerly worked for us, have been led astray by labor agitators of bad principles and bad judgment, the opportunity of very many of them to work for the Draper Company has gone.

Yours very truly,

C. E. NUTTING,

General Superintendent,

Draper Company.

The following extracts from letters from customers will be of interest:

"We have been surprised to see that you people had any trouble with labor. The writer on a visit to your plant and mill village some years ago was so impressed with the comforts and conveniences that you provide for your operatives, that he did not suppose there could anything like the spirit of discontent ever find an entrance there.

But the representatives of the I. W. W. are a very busy people, to work up mischief everywhere."

"We are very glad indeed to note that you have had the courage to take the stand that you did in your labor troubles. It looks to us as though every manufacturer in the land should thank you for what you have done in this matter. Manufacturers as a class should take hold of the I. W. W. and fight the thing out to a finish, and the sooner the better. These people are unreasonable and unjust in everything they do. We think the various states should pass laws covering such lawlessness as these people seem to revel in."

"I received your Cotton Chats this morning and was very much amazed at the stories of the I. W. W. contained therein.

Please accept the assurance of my kindest regards and wishes that you will speedily accomplish the defeat of these * * * * * . Their actions are not approved of by right-living citizens, and any gang who have for their standard "No flag, no boss and no God" cannot find support from the people of America.

You certainly have the approval of the majority of the people, and they are watching with interest the fight against this imported gang of Anarchists."

"We received your Cotton Chats No. 126, April 1913. The writer has read it with much interest. We wish to express our opinion of the fight you are making with the I. W. W. in Hopedale. We are glad to see that some one has got some "sand," because sooner or later we have all got to meet this question that you are meeting at Hopedale.

"We do not know today whether we are waiting for any material which we have ordered from you, but it makes no difference whether we get it or not."

"Your most exceptional bulletin of April, 1913, received. We are in sympathy with the way you have handled your matters and believe it has been a help to all manufacturers in this locality."

"The I. W. W.'s are outlaws, and have got to be so considered. Free speech is not an allowance to incite rebellion, social or industrial, and the right to work for such wages as are desired is a constitutional right and must be enforced at any cost. Labor must be taught that it is the co-partner of capital, and each must loyally support and be honest with each other. Certainly the I. W. W. **must** be **eliminated."**

"I have been intending to write your company for some time and express my sympathy and regret at the serious trouble you have been having at your plant. I sincerely trust by this time you have everything adjusted. From all I can gather, you have been most outrageously treated and I trust you have won out without having to make any compromise."